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TWO MIDDLE-ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS FROM THE ANGLO-NORMAN

I

It is worthy of note that the Middle-English collection of prose homilies known as the *Mirrir*¹ bears a very close relation to the Anglo-Norman *Miroir*² ascribed to Robert of Gretham. Since neither work is in print, a complete line-by-line comparison of the two has not been possible, and their exact relationship, therefore, cannot be stated. The prologues and the beginnings of selected tales from the *Miroir*, printed by M. Meyer in *Romania*, have however been compared with the equivalent sections of the *Mirrir*. These show a close agreement.

Some additions and abridgments appear in the Middle-English prologue, though much of the prologue of the *Miroir* is carried over in an exact translation. The *Mirrir* retains the author's refusal to tell his name, and in both works the pious subject-matter is scornfully compared to the useless vanity exemplified by romances, of which a series is enumerated. The examples chosen in the Middle-English, however, differ entirely from those used in the French. The following is one of the sentences added by the Middle-English: "men saip on old englis pat weneing nis no wisdom." Two of the tales quoted by M. Meyer are lacking in the Middle-English; the themes of the rest, in spite of verbal differences, appear identical in both versions.

¹ The *Mirrir* has been referred to by the editors of the Wicliffite Bible, who made a few short quotations (*The Holy Bible . . . by John Wycliffe and his followers*, ed. Madden and Forshall, Oxford, 1850, I, xx, note); by Miss A. C. Paues, who lists four manuscripts (*A Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version*, Cambridge, 1904, p. xiv); and by Dr. M. R. James in cataloguing the copy among the manuscripts of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

² All our information as to the *Miroir* is derived from the researches of M. Meyer, who quotes largely from the work (*Romania*, XV, 296 ff.; XXXII, 28 ff.; *Bull. soc. anc. textes fr.*, 1879, pp. 62 ff.). He lists three manuscripts and two fragments, and two more copies have since come to light among the manuscripts of Lord Middleton (*Hist. Mes. Com.*, 1911, p. 220; noted in *Romania*, XLII, 145). The present writer has in preparation an article discussing the authorship of the *Miroir*.

The following parallel quotations will illustrate the relation between the two works:¹

(PROLOGUE)

Mani men it ben þat han wille
to here rede romaunce and gestes þat
is more þan idelschip. and þat ywil
wel þat alle men it witen. ffor hii ben
contruued þoru mannes wit þat setten
her hertes to folies and truffes as þe
lier doþ. . . .

for god bitt þat man schal ben al
attendaunt for him. ffor he haþ iuen
us bodi and lif seing and hering speking
and spelling and vnderstanding. . . .
We ben alle his spencers for to serue
him of his office. ȝif we serue him
wel an hundrefþold schal be oure
mede. And who þat doþ euel bi his
gode wille. ful gret schal be þe uen-
geaunce þatschal be taken of him. And
for þat we wil ben on in god. ichil
fonde to drawen ȝou fram uanite. so
þat we mai ȝelde him in gode what
þat he askeþ of cristen man and
woman. ffor þi ich haue mad þis boke
þat ȝe mai reden on. ffor no þinge ȝe
ne schal finde hereinne bot þat god
is wele ipaied wiþ al and þe saule
itauȝt and þe bodi also. þerfore whan
ȝe han wille forto reden takeþ forþ
þis boke. þe godspelles of þe sonun-
daies and a parti of oþer massedaies
ȝe schul finde hereinne. ffirst þe texte
and þanne þe vnderstondinge þerof.
. . . .
þis boke is cleped mirrur. Now hereþ
þoru what reson. In þe mirrur a man
seþ his bodi and bi þis writ boþe bodi
and soule [fol. 1 ff.]

A sa trechiere dame Aline
Saluz en la vertu divine.
Ma dame, bien l'ai oï dire
Que mult amez oïr et lire
Chaunsqun de geste e d'estorie,
E mult mettez la memorie;
Mès bien voille qe vous le sachez,
Qe ceo est plus que vanitez,
Qe ceo n'est rien for contrevure
E folie de vaine cure. . . .
E Dieu mult (plest?) de sun servant
K'il seit a lui tut atendaunt. . . .
Il nous ad doné cors e alme,
Veer, parler, sens e oïe,
Nus eimes tuz ses despenzers
Si nous a gré bien le servum
Cent double en ert le gueredoun;
E qi mesfait a escient
Mult en ert dur(e) le vengeance.
E pur ceo qe nus eime encé,
Tolir nous veut de vanité,
Que nus lui puissums rendre en bien
Quanche il demande a cristien.
Pur ceo ai fet cest escrit,
Sur le purrez lire a grant delit,
Ou nul rien ne troverez
Dunt Jhesu ne seit paieiz,
Dunt l'alme ne seit conforter
E la char de maus desturner.
Quant vous prendra cele cure,
Treez avant ceste escripture:
Les evangeliz i verrez
Mult proprement enromaunceez,
E puis les esposiciouns
Brevement sulum les sens espuns,
Ceste livre *Mirrour* ad noun;
Ore oiez par quel raisoun:
Par le mirour seit l'em defors,
E par cest escrit alme e cors

[Romania, XV, 298 ff.]

¹ The quotations from the prologue of the *Mirrour* are made from notes taken by the writer in 1912 and recently read with the manuscript, Harl. 5085, by Miss E. M. Thompson. The comparison of texts in the body of the two works was made by Miss Thompson, and quotations from the body of the *Mirrour* are drawn from her notes. The punctuation of the manuscript is preserved, but the abbreviations (which are very few) are expanded.

(A TALE FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER)

It bifel on a time of a preest of
 Knaresburgh¹ þat dwelled þerinne.
 And whan he had long lived he lened
 him to his bedde and wende forto
 dien and biforn him com a 3onge man
 and toke him bi þe honde and bad him
 come wiþ him and nold he ne wolde he
 he went wiþ him. And he ladde him
 in to mani stedes and schewed him
 mani þinges [fol. 71 f.]

Dunt avint jadis a un prestre,
 Qui de Canterbire estoit mestre.
 Quant lunge i out cumversé
 Si s'est cuntre lit chuché;
 E, quant il quida devier,
 Devant lui vint un bachelier;
 La mein li tendi, si li dit:
 "Vien tei ici ad mei," et il si fist.
 U ne volsit u ne deignast,
 Cuvint lui qu'ove lui alast,
 E en plusurs lius l'amena
 E multes choses lui mustra
 [Romania, XXXII, 30 f.]

(A TALE FOR THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY)

It bifel so þat it was an hermite and
 lived fer in þe wildernes. And long
 he had liued and serued god to wille.
 And fer he had gon and in mani
 diuers stedes [fol. 135]

Dunt il a un hermite avint,
 Que luns en le deserte se tint.
 Grant siecle illuc aveit conversé
 E od Deu mult servi a gré;
 A grant age venu esteit
 Ke trestut ben fluriseit
 [Romania, XXXII, 36]

II

A manuscript of St. John's College, Cambridge, No. G. 30 (197 of Dr. James's catalogue), contains a version of the Anglo-Norman *Manuel des Péchés* in Middle-English prose, which seems to have passed unnoted. Dr. James fails to identify the text, though he quotes the name "William Wytinde" and the author's lines as to his origin. This version has not been compared throughout with the original, but the comparison of isolated passages has everywhere found a close agreement. The following parallel quotations will illustrate the relation between the two works:²

¹ The Middle-English here probably does not depart from its original, for M. Meyer notes variant readings from the French manuscripts, and among them "Knaresburgh," and "Gnaresbure" (*Rom.*, XV, 303).

² I quote from notes made for me from the manuscript by Mr. Alfred Rogers of the University Library, Cambridge; and from *Roberd of Brunne's Handlyng Synne, with Le Manuel des Pechiez, by Wilham of Wadington*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, printed for the Roxburghe Club, London, 1862. Dr. James writes the name of the translator as "William of Wytinde," but I have followed Mr. Rogers' reading, in which the "of" is omitted.

The beginnings are as follows:

þe vertu of þe holi gost be helpynge	La uertue del seint esprit
to us in þys wrytinge to ȝow seche	Nus seit eidant en cest escrit,
þynges to schewe wher of a man	A uus les choses ben mustrer
schulde schryue hym.	Dunt hom se deit confesser,
þe manuel hyt is called ffor in þe honde	Le manuel est apele,
hyt schulde be bore. . . . [fol. 1]	Car en main deit estre porte
	[pp. 1, 4]

The English version, like the French, goes on to the discussion of the Articles of the Faith, the Ten Commandments, the Seven Deadly Sins, etc. The author's references to himself in the epilogue appear as follows:

Of þe vrenche noþer of þe ryme no	De le franceis, ne del rimer,
man schulde blame me for I was bore	Ne me dait nuls hom blamer,
in Ingelond and norschud and ordred	Kar en engleterre fu ne,
of a lytul town þat is nat nemned	E norri ordine, et aleue;
noþer burh ne cite.	De vne vile sui nome
	Ou ne est burg ne cite.
Of god be blessud evry man þat	De deu seit beneit chescun hom
prayeth for William Wytinde ¹ [fol. 82a].	Ky prie pur Wilham de Wadigtoun
	[pp. 413, 414].

This text agrees with Harl. MS 4971² in putting the two concluding prayers after the epilogue. The conclusion in this version is therefore as follows:

And ȝyf me myn waryson in ȝowre	Si me donez ma gareisun
swete hows. Evry man sey amen,	En votre douce mansiun.
amen, amen [fol. 86b, f.].	Amen, amen, die chescun homme
	[p. 413].

III

It may be useful to add here two other identifications of St. John's College manuscripts which have also escaped Dr. James. No. 181 is the *Speculum Spiritualium*.³ No. 202 is Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*. In the case of No. 181 Dr. James conjectures the authorship of Richard Methley of Mount Grace. This supposition

¹ It will be noted that a new variant is here added to the numerous spellings of this name already known.

² See the *Catalogue of Romances in the British Museum*, III, London, 1910, pp. 272 f. The text of the present version will be more fully discussed in a later paper.

³ See Horstman, *Yorkshire Writers*, London, 1896, II, xl, n. 2.

is untenable because the manuscript in which the work occurs belongs to the early fifteenth century, and works of Richard Methley in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS 1160, and Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, MS 221, are dated in the text at 1487 and 1491, respectively. Dr. James conjectures Methley's authorship also for the translation into Latin of the *Prick of Conscience* in Magdalen College, Cambridge, MS F. 4.14. The dates make this, too, impossible, since Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, MS 273, of the fourteenth century, contains a copy of the same translation.

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